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## THE AMERICAN BISHOP OF TO-DAY.

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BY THE REV. JULIUS H. WARD.

THERE is a constant inquiry in a free country like our own, where Christianity is entirely controlled by voluntary associations, for men who have such discernment in affairs that they are able to interpret the signs of the times and to give their fellows the direction which they stand in need of. Every denomination has its wise leaders, who are trusted and followed because they are able to speak by the event and carry the rank and file with them. They are natural leaders, not crowned with authority, but the outgrowth of the soil,—men who have the instinct in morals and in religion which Chief-Justice Marshall had in the interpretation of the Constitution,—men who do the right thing at the right time. They gather a constituency around them, and are influential in their several denominations, because they know how to organize public opinion, and take the lead in religious affairs.

You can think of these men in our American development, and can trace their hand-prints in our ecclesiastical history as you can trace the furrow of a plough through a large field. Francis Wayland left such an impression upon the Baptist body; William Ellery Channing had such a guidance of the earlier Unitarians; Jonathan Edwards for one generation, and William E. Park for a later one, led the Congregationalists like a flock of sheep; John Carroll first organized the Roman Catholic body in Maryland; Francis Asbury set in order the Methodist household when his preachers lived on horseback; William Penn made the Pennsylvania Quakers a unique Christian sect; the Hodges have set their mark in this century upon the Presbyterian body, and among Churchmen there have been at least two bishops who have stood head and shoulders above others of their order in the ability to organize and develop a diocese into vigorous and expansive life—John Henry Hobart and Alonzo Potter.

These are but a few of the men who have left their mark upon the ecclesiastical life of the century. If one follows their plans of work and sees what they have accomplished in the religious organizations to which they severally belonged, he will find that in every instance they had natural qualities of leadership. Through the language of the spirit, or through the power of mind and will combined, they had great weight in shaping public opinion and in directing religious life. It is to-day as it was in the times of the Hebrew prophets. The Christian Church, taken as a whole, is advanced principally, though not entirely, by men who have the power of lead in them, men who see further than their associates, men who have the vision of the whole and comprehend life in its unity, men who have a certain divine right to govern the world, and really control it so far as humanity is uplifted and advanced.

These natural leaders can neither be commanded when they seem to be most needed, nor can they be grown at will, as the quality of the lower animals is improved by the law of natural selection. They come and they go, but it is the mark of wisdom in ordinary affairs that they shall be selected, whenever it is possible, to take the control of their fellow-men and to guide them in public affairs. Much study has been given to the beginnings of organic Christianity, and since Luther lost the opportunity to give the Catholic episcopate to the Protestant Church much ingenuity has been expended in trying to show that this doctrine of leadership, which in the state early assumed the form of kingship, and in the family or the tribe got the name of patriarch, has always had in the Christian Church first the name of apostle and then ever afterward the title of bishop. It matters not whether the episcopate is clearly traced in the records called the New Testament or not; the important fact to be noted is that the moment you begin to find anything like historical facts pertaining to Christianity, you discover that bishops have the leadership in the Christian Church, and that the endeavor everywhere seems to have been in the earliest days to select the best man among the clergy for this important apostolic office. The attempt was made to give the natural leadership which exists in unorganized society such a position in the church of God that the divine forces in the world might be not only highly organized, but applied with the best tact and discretion to the whole of society.

What constitutes the charm of such scanty records of the early

church as have been transmitted to us through the ante-Nicene Fathers is that the bishops brought all the forces at their command to bear upon the organization of society on a Christian basis. Their limitations were great, and yet their sagacity and insight and consecrated purpose were such that, even when it came to the point that Athanasius alone opposed the world, it was Athanasius who conquered, simply because he could not be put down, nor could the idea which controlled him be struck out of existence. There is no period in Christian history when this episcopal lead is not somewhere or at some point the glory and joy of the church; and it is by going back to the struggles which some of these great bishops endured to maintain the integrity of the faith, and to keep the church as broad and comprehensive as the whole of humanity, that we obtain that conception of the episcopal office in itself, and of its influence for good when great and consecrated men fill out its functions, which it is wise to keep before the church to-day in order that its leaders may not fall short of the high standard which their predecessors have reached.

The period in which we are now living, and the community in which the Catholic faith is to be extended, are not favorable to that type of Christianity which, for the sake of distinction, we call historical. The type of Christianity which was struck out at the Reformation is the prevailing type in the United States. For the most part the office of a bishop is not fairly understood, and his services are not in demand. So far as the popular rush and enthusiasm go, the purely Protestant form of Christianity is most desired and seems to have most weight. It is true that if the Roman and Anglican population are taken together, historical Christianity has numbers in its favor; but, if you take account of the elements which at the hour are most active in our religious world, it is Protestantism of evangelical or Puritan type which now controls North America, and is likely to control it for a long time yet to come. The set of the tide is that way. The political tendencies of the country are in accord with its evangelical movement. It is still the purpose of Americans, as it was two and a half centuries ago the purpose of our forefathers, to found a church without a bishop, as well as a state without a king. The Roman communion is so new in its power among us, and its influence is so strictly confined within its own people, that it does

not yet, to any appreciable extent, direct or control Protestant thought. The religious leader in the Protestant world is the smart man who happens to turn up, and who secures unexpectedly the confidence of his fellow-religionists.

The idea which is behind our working religious forces is not that of Christianity as an organized plan for the reaching out to the whole of society in a spiritual way that may be called constructive; it is, rather, the reaching out to individuals in the community and persuading them to accept, as single persons, definite religious beliefs which are to secure to them the pledge of heaven and the certainty of eternal blessedness. Perhaps the purpose of these two types of Christianity may in the end be called identical, but the method by which they act upon society, if they keep to their normal lines of work, is widely different. The one reaches out to society as a whole, while the other regards the whole of the community as a collection of individual units. The one lays hold of all the natural, the honest, the social, the active, forces which have free play in a community, and directs them to a spiritual end by lifting them up to the point where they take on a spiritual impression and receive spiritual lead; the other keeps more strictly to a highly sensitive spiritual purpose, and introduces into the community such a principle of selection that a strict line of demarcation is laid down, and the saints and the sinners are as distinctly known in this world as it is believed that the sheep and the goats will be known at the day of judgment. By the work of the one, where organic Christianity has sufficiently gained the lead to express itself distinctly through institutional as well as individual forms, society has received something like a Christian atmosphere and a Christian color and tone. People have gained a respect for Christian institutions, and, while humanity has not been fully redeemed, its vices have been lessened and its way of doing things has been improved. It is this more comprehensive influence of the church in society to-day which people are in search of, and the influence of the individual or personal method of building up the church of Christ, if it has not been greatly lessened, is more and more felt to be the use of one sort of power which needs its complement in organic methods to make it effective in reaching spiritual results. More and more the evangelical method seems to be barren of that kind of result which organizes the life of the com-

munity upon a higher plane. It is not that its leaders are not in earnest, or that they do not work hard to reach results ; it is because they do not use all the agencies which have been transmitted through the historical church for the regeneration of society ; it is mainly because they have lost the method of organizing social forces which the early church accomplished through the episcopate—forces which in modern times have chiefly been organized and controlled by that part of the Christian Church in which the episcopate has been a central and vital reality and a great working force.

It has been necessary to make this statement of the difference between organic and evangelical methods of building up Christian society, not in order to ascertain what the bishop is by canonical right in the church of Christ, but to see the place which he occupies not only in the historical church, but in the direction of the forces by which the church brings its strongest influence to bear constructively upon modern society. The American bishop of to-day does not differ in his title, in his functions, or in his authority from his episcopal brother of the first five Christian centuries ; but his place is in the life of to-day, and unless he takes account of the elements which are around him, and knows how to organize public opinion and found institutions and repair the leakages of society, he may be an excellent functionary, but he is also practically a cipher in the Christian world. It would be better for such a man never to have been taken out of the natural obscurity where he belonged than to make a travesty of the functions of the episcopal office, when all men are longing to see whatever organizing power this office may possess applied quickly and strongly to the regeneration of society.

The American bishop—and here I mean not the Methodist superintendents who call themselves bishops, nor the Moravian apostles who are believed rightly to have a claim to this title, nor the Roman episcopate, whose authority is not doubted, but the episcopate of that communion which contains the largest number of English-speaking people in the world, and which in this country is called by a name that belittles its character—cannot be simply an ecclesiastical functionary who ordains priests and confirms the children of the church, settling down to diocesan work strictly within ecclesiastical lines and losing sight of what seems to be his providential place in American life. If he

has not some natural gifts for the control of men and the interpretation of life and character, he had better not be a bishop at all ; he will be simply one of the painful failures, walking daily in the sight of all men, which the community does not like to tolerate. Society is so unformed, so in the process of realizing something better, so ready to be moulded, that the leader has as distinct an office and opportunity in the collective American church as the Hebrew prophet had under the Jewish kings in the direction of the life of the people of Israel. The Episcopal Church has often lacked its opportunity in this country because political and social forces have been arrayed against it, but to-day its opportunity has come ; the demand for constructive religious forces is everywhere increasing ; and of those religious bodies which have a Protestant character in distinction from the Church of Rome, it is chiefly the one that presents Christianity to the people in the organic and comprehensive form which has already been stated. There is thus opened to its episcopate an opportunity for service which is not to be thought of at all as the building up of one communion at the expense of another, but as the bringing into American society of a constructive and helpful element which the purely evangelical bodies do not seem to be able to command or to know how to employ. It is from this point of view that the office of an American bishop, in the light of his social opportunity and usefulness, becomes, perhaps, more important than it has ever been at any time since the Apostles intrusted to the bishops, whom they set apart by the laying-on of hands, the guidance of the infant church.

Neither too little nor too much is to be made of the organic method by which the historical church has always approached society ; nor is the episcopate to be magnified, as some who are admitted to its offices and functions magnify it, as if the respect shown to the office were an acknowledgment of the superior personal qualities of the man himself over his brethren. American bishops have shown a great deal of iron and clay in their making-up, and sometimes their qualifications for the position have been such that nobody but themselves could discover them ; but it is pleasanter to indicate what this office may be used for than to point out the personal weaknesses of those who sink the office in the man. In order to do this one must revert to the point of leadership. There are certain qualities which you look for in a

bishop as a matter of course. He must be an honest and devout man, the husband of one wife, one who has the gift of administration, one who knows how to approach his fellow-men not only as a priest, but as a member of society. All these things are commonly looked for in the choice of a bishop, but the election to this office by the rule of the majority, which is the American method,—as distinguished from the English method, which is that of selection by the prime minister, confirmation by the Queen, and then consecration by the archbishop of the province, or the Roman method, which is the sending by the archbishop of the province of two or three suitable names of priests to the Pope, who makes the selection,—is an uncertain method of securing a really competent leader. The worst bishops in the American Episcopal Church have been those who were chosen, not because they were wanted, but because, when neither party could obtain the priest it most desired, they happened to be so far without distinction as to be available candidates.

The essential point, the condition that is first after the implied fitness is determined on, is that the man to be selected for the episcopal office should be a natural leader of men, and should have practical ability to deal with the whole of life. He should be, humanly speaking, an all-around man. He should be able to deal with the questions which come before him as one who sees their different sides and looks at them not as a partisan, but in their totality; but, most of all, in dealing with Christian people of other names, he should remember that it is his business to begin with points of agreement rather than with points of difference, as St. Paul did in his celebrated address to the Greeks on Mars Hill. We have had quite enough of the episcopal functionary, the bishop strong in details, the bishop of one idea, the bishop who apes English customs which are well enough in England, but do not increase respect for the episcopal office in free America, the bishop who foists his personal likes and dislikes upon the congregations in his diocese like a spiritual autocrat, the bishop who deals in admonitions whether they are called for or not, the bishop whose head is the lightest part of the whole man, the bishop who throws away his opportunity and can never regain it any more than Esau could recover his birthright, the bishop who clutches at all the constitutional rights of the diocese and assumes them to be his just prerogative, the bishop who says one



thing and does another, the bishop who loses the confidence of his clergy because he is not true to them, the bishop who strains at a gnat and swallows a camel. These are some of the abuses of the episcopal office which have discredited it in the judgment of Americans.

There is an interpretation of this office in its relation to other Christian bodies which, perhaps more than any other single feature, has hurt the Christian consciousness of America, and that is the widely-prevailing, but not universal, attitude of the American episcopate toward other Christian bodies. Much can be said on both sides of this statement. The Memorial Movement of 1853 did great honor to most of the American bishops, and had the clergy in the General Convention been as broad-minded as their bishops, the Episcopal Church would at that time have extended terms of unity to other Christian bodies in the United States which they could have accepted without discredit to themselves. The difficulty with some High-Church bishops has been that they could not see beyond the battlements of the Protestant Episcopal Church. Bishop Whittingham had this limited vision. Low-Church bishops, like Bishop McIlvaine, on the other hand, have torn down the walls of separation so completely that they failed to make others understand in what the worth of the Episcopal Church consists. Neither extreme has promoted Christian unity, and the frequent hauteur of the American bishop, which is more in his manner than in his thought, has confirmed the Baptist or the Presbyterian in his traditional hatred of episcopacy as the "execrable sum of all villainies." The episcopate everywhere, even to-day, meets the prejudice that it is not in harmony with American ideas, and just so far as existing ecclesiastics help personally to confirm this impression, they put themselves out of sympathy with the American people and deprive themselves of the opportunity to contribute through the organizing agency of the episcopate a helpful element to American society. On the other hand, just so far as American bishops are truly national in sentiment and feeling, and have the power to adapt their office to the needs of American society, they are sure to find themselves in positions of leadership, where their influence is welcomed quite as heartily outside of their jurisdiction as within it. Any special aping what is distinctly English may be unimportant in itself, and yet it hurts an American

bishop as much as it hurts the congregations which are under his charge. But when he uses his opportunity in the social movements of the day, and in the Christian movements where he does not sacrifice principle, to give Christianity a broader and closer contact with the whole of life, he adds the weight of his office to his Christian manhood and takes a position which all men respect and honor.

Everything comes back to this point of leadership, and to the ability of a bishop to see where his work lies and to do it in such a way as not needlessly to wound people who have been trained in a different household of faith. It may be said that this is a worldly, rather than a spiritual, interpretation of the bishop's office. It is certainly an incomplete view. But if the limits of this article permitted it would be easy to show its essential harmony with the New Testament idea of the apostolate, as illustrated in the ministry of the first overseers of the Christian Church, and in the ministry of that preëminent man whose being all things to all men was never the surrender of principle, but always the offering of himself. Indeed, did these limits permit, it would not be hard to show that the essence of leadership in the Founder of Christianity consisted of two elements—the power of putting the mind of Jesus into touch with humanity, with all its varieties, and then the grace of self-effacing service, “even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.” Surely the ideal of his ministry must needs be the worthiest for any bishop! But in a community whose positive institutions are chiefly political, and in which Christianity is not developed specially through institutions and by an organizing process, the religious body that knows how to deal with the whole of life, and to extend its influence through every grade and order in society, has a work to do outside of strictly church lines, which is quite as important as the work to be done within them. In this work the parish clergy may be counted upon to assist, but it is the bishop who must take the initiative and lead off. In order to do this he must be unencumbered with duties which can be discharged by others; he must not waste his time in details; he must work through social channels and reach the heart of society, without neglecting his ministrations at the altar or his engagements to his own flock; he must be free to use his opportunity at the turning-points of power so that the common life of the day, not less

than the truly Christian life, shall be made to feel the spiritual impact of the church of Christ.

It is because the evangelical bodies in America have developed the individual Christian life at the expense of the corporate influence of the church as an institution, that the American bishop has a special influence to-day, if he is equal to the situation, in giving direction to American society. The position which the present bishop of New York took with reference to the drift of American life, at the recent celebration of the beginning of federal government in this country, is an illustration of this reaching-out to the direction of public opinion and the guidance of society. Bishop Potter could not at any time have wisely administered the rebuke which he uttered. The strength of that rebuke was in the fitness of the time and place for giving it quite as much as in the courage of the one who gave it. The service which Bishop Whipple has rendered to the government in behalf of the Indians is another instance in which the ecclesiastic and the man have worked together to advance the interests of a conquered race. No man has done more to ameliorate their condition or stood firmer as their friend. It is in this social leadership, which has behind it the spiritual leadership, that the American episcopate, using its opportunity wisely, can bring to bear upon the whole of American life a corrective and wise influence which, in its larger interpretation, means that the Christian Church is working constructively in the moral and spiritual life of the people in the same way that the nation is giving direction to their political life. There are examples in English and French episcopates of this sort of influence, such as those of Wilberforce and Fraser and Selwyn in our own day in England, and those of Dupanloup and Darboy in France, and in the episcopate of Nicholas Pavillon of an earlier date, in all of which one finds that men carried into society at large, without neglecting their duties to their immediate dioceses, the directing and inspiring influence of Christian leaders.

The American Episcopal Church in this country, with nearly seventy bishops engaged in active work, is employing the episcopate in religious leadership, especially in the newer sections of the country, with a very clear idea of its use in Christian and social guidance, and a very large number of these bishops, especially those in missionary jurisdictions, have been selected because they

had such gifts of building up parishes and of influencing general society as were required in the early church; and wherever these men are working with a large interpretation of their mission, with the consciousness that it may be within their power to knit together bodies of Christians in a way which never will be entirely lost,—which was the mission of Bishop Fraser,—their labors bear testimony to a use of the episcopal office in a very large and free way for the ends which have here been stated to be within its special province.

The recognition of this broader understanding of what the American bishop may accomplish has a wider bearing upon the future of Christian society in America than those are ready to acknowledge who live and move and have their being strictly within denominational lines. The mission of the American Episcopal Church lies in the possibility of its contribution of a better working system and a larger liberty under competent direction than has heretofore seemed possible in the whole field of American Christianity. The episcopate is valuable because it is the method by which the Christian Church can be kept as broad and inclusive as the whole of humanity, and by which men can be kept united in essentials while their individual ways of appropriating truth and developing the spiritual life are as unrestricted as the air of heaven which they breathe. The American bishops in offering this sort of episcopacy to the divided Christianity of the United States will be met by the olive-branch and the palm wherever they shall show simply and only that their ancient order is vital to the church of Christ in the sense that it supplies a method by which all Christians, with God's blessing, may reach better results in the work which they are trying to do as the organizers of modern Christendom.

JULIUS H. WARD.